

Bute Produce (Fyne Futures) &
Bute Advice Centre

“Grow Your Own” Pilot 2014
Workshop Evaluation



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Background

Bute Produce and Bute Advice Centre were very keen to collaborate to address the issues of food poverty on the Island of Bute. The Bute Food-Bank as run by Bute Advice Centre with support from Bute Oasis, in the first half of the year supported 89 individuals/families. A high proportion were people who were recognised as disabled. Bute Advice Centre primarily offers advice, support and representation to clients with benefit issues, money worries, housing and energy issues. In order to add to the tool-box of potential solutions for clients, the “Grow Your Own” collaboration was created, whereby the skills and knowledge of staff at Bute Produce could be shared with members of the public on restricted incomes who want to grow their own food in a bid to eat a healthier diet and spend less. Clients being supported by Bute Advice Centre often feel powerless and very overwhelmed by their circumstances. This project was one way of promoting better physical and mental health, increasing self-confidence and independence. Bute is recognised as suffering from multiple areas of deprivation, this potential form of possible assistance to support the most vulnerable needed to be explored, the 8 week pilot was created.

Project

The aim of the project was to impart skills and knowledge to clients of Bute Advice Centre and those in the community who could benefit from the project, enabling them to be more resilient in dealing with life choices. Developing and understanding basic banking and household budgeting skills along with the development of horticultural skills would lead to a better quality of life, a feeling of empowerment and independence.

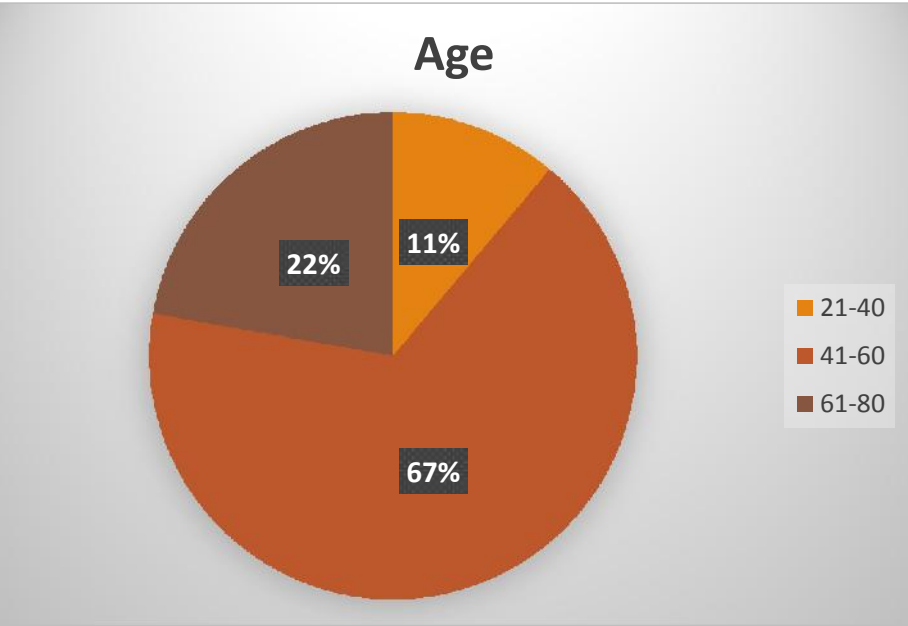
Where clients are in receipt of all the benefits, both in work and out of work, that they are entitled to, understanding how to make the most of their budget is fundamental to their physical and mental well-being.

Invitations were sent to individuals who were thought to be in a position where the project could offer a positive outcome. After careful consideration a small group of 12 were offered the opportunity.

Participant Demographic

The data below relates only to those who attended the programme.

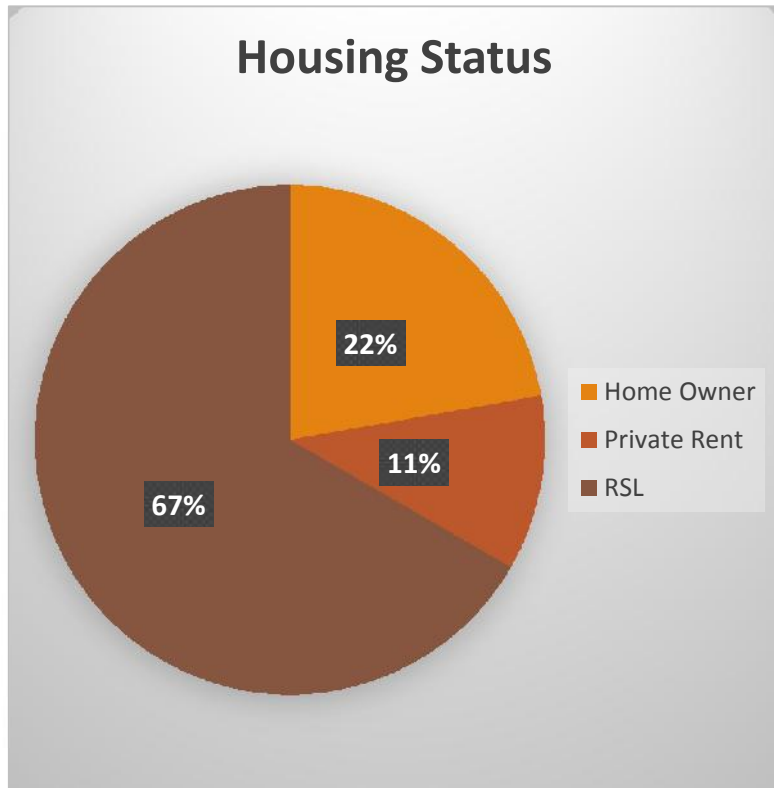
CLIENT AGE



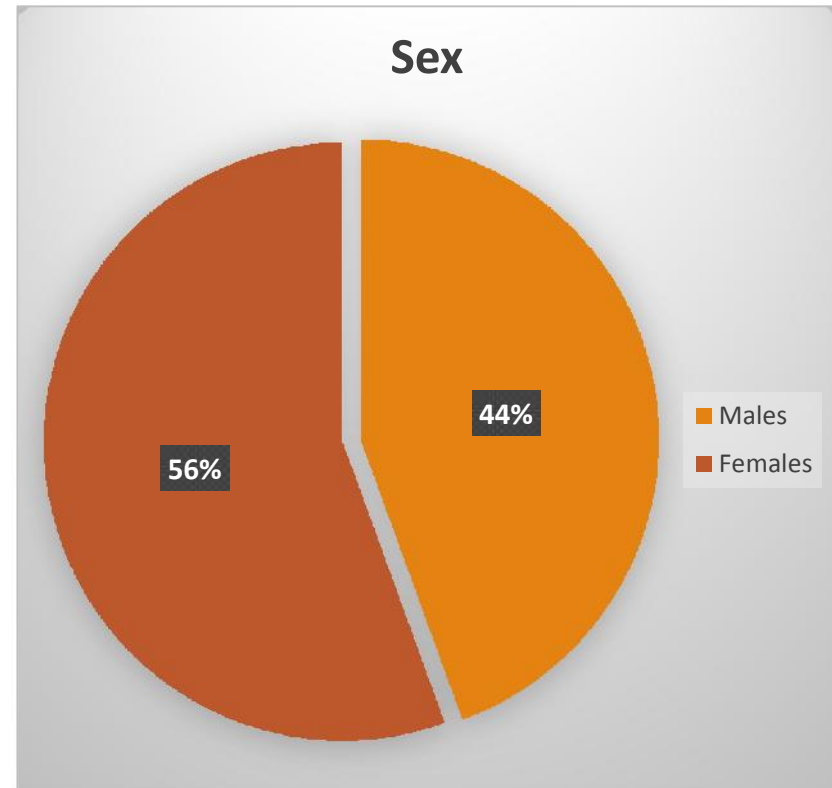
CLIENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS



HOUSING STATUS



SEX



INPUTS

OUTPUTS

Bute Advice Centre provided qualified experienced staff to provide household budgeting skills/income maximisation training from Bute Advice Centre premises.

Bute Produce provided qualified experienced staff to develop and facilitate the “Grow Your Own” workshop held at Bute Produce, Townhead.

16 Individuals were invited to participate, of which 12 made a firm commitment to attend, 8 regularly attended, with 6 attending every session. Those unable to attend quoted poor health, family crisis & child-care commitments amongst the reasons for non-attendance, however most would be willing to participate in future workshops should they be available.

Clients were requested to complete an end of project questionnaire regarding the support received from both Bute Produce and Bute Advice Centre. The following reports show the results beginning with questions asked relating to **Bute Advice Centre**. Participants answered between 1 and 5, with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

The Adviser communicated clearly.

100% answered strongly agree.

The Adviser supported me to bring my issue to a satisfactory conclusion.

100% answered strongly agree.

I felt respected throughout my appointments.

100% answered strongly agree.

As a result of advice I feel my stress/anxiety levels have reduced.

100% answered strongly agree.

I feel more confident knowing I have support in dealing with issues in the future.

100% answered strongly agree.

I am better able to maintain my household budget after support.

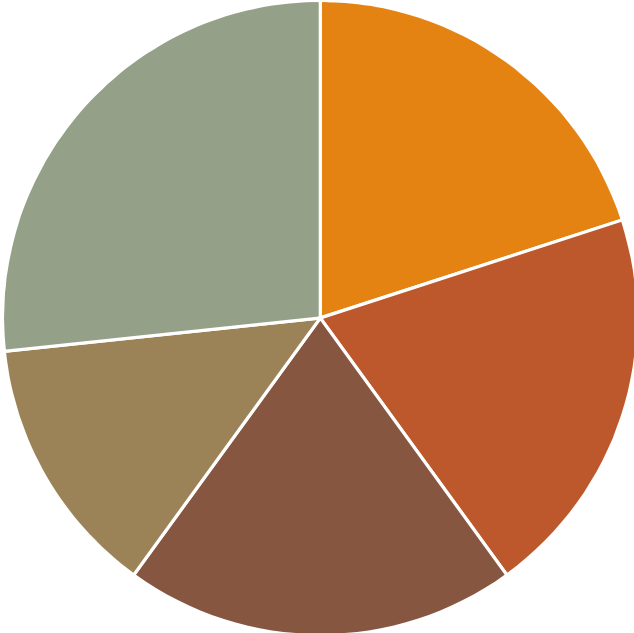
75% answered strongly agree 25% abstained

When asked "Would you say your mental health has improved as a result of support from Bute Advice Centre?" the replies were:

100% stated Yes "It is wonderful to know BAC are able to help in any way. Staff are always professional and a great team." "I still have stressful situations but its good to have someone to talk it through to." "I always feel Bute Advice are always available to help with issues which would otherwise cause great stress". "Meeting other people was lovely".

CLIENT WERE ASKED TO SHOW THE AREAS WHERE SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED TO THEM BY BUTE ADVICE CENTRE (CLIENTS OFTEN CHOSE MORE THAN ONE AREA)

Support Provided



■ Welfare Benefits ■ Money Advice ■ Budgeting Support ■ Energy Issues ■ Welfare Rights

Clients were also requested to complete a questionnaire that directly related to the time spent with **Bute Produce**. The following feedback was provided, on the basis of 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree:

The presenter communicated the information clearly.

100% answered strongly agree.

The presenter made the subject matter compelling.

100% answered strongly agree.

The presenter was able to answer all questions.

100% answered strongly agree.

The workshop was relevant to me.

75% answered strongly agree, 25% answered agree.

I understand the relationship between growing a cost effectiveness.

100% answered strongly agree.

I have developed new skills for life.

100% answered strongly agree,

The work motivated me to take action.

100% answered strongly agree.

I want to tell others about what was presented.

100% answered strongly agree.

I have the confidence to use the knowledge gained from the workshop in my life.

75% answered strongly agree, 25% answered agree.

The venue was located conveniently.

50% replied strongly agree, 50% replied agree.

The duration of the workshop was right for me.

100% replied strongly agree.

The workshop promoted a community spirit.

100% replied strongly agree.


When asked “Would you say our mental health has improved as a result of the workshop?”

100% answered YES, stating “It made me realise I knew more about gardening/growing and raised my confidence”. “I still have difficulties but very good to have a good environment”. “It was good to learn a new skill & meet people of a like mind”.

When asked “Would you say your physical health has improved as a result of the workshop?”

50% replied YES – stating “It was good getting out in the fresh air, with the good weather it was peaceful”.

50% replied NO – stating “I was already fairly fit for an OAP”. “I had to undergo surgery during the course” (unrelated to the course).




Outcomes as perceived by staff at both Bute Advice Centre and Bute Produce

Strengths – Short Term

Increased awareness of the relationship between growing your own vegetables and being cost efficient
Increased knowledge and understanding of growing vegetables, basic budgeting and income maximization
Change in attitudes to growing your own food
Development of skills in managing money and growing vegetables
Developing an informed opinion on a topic of interest
Developing aspirations for the future
Raised levels of motivation
Using the support as a stepping stone to training/work opportunities

Strengths – Medium Term

Better budgeting skills/income maximized
Social isolation addressed
Building community capacity
Positive impact on local environment
Increased physical and mental wellbeing
Increased sense of purpose and direction
Positive changes in behaviour
Positive changes in practice
Improved social action choices
Increased knowledge of services available



Strengths - Long Term

As this was a short pilot it is challenging to determine the long term outcomes, however it is predicted to be positive in relation to social, economic, civic and environmental issues. This is borne out by participants being actively engaged beyond in the pilot in volunteer work, growing their own food at home, being evangelical to others about what they have learnt. (See Participant feedback comments)

Unexpected Benefits

Staff participating were greatly boosted by the positive feedback given by participants. Many of the staff at Bute Produce are on short term contracts and felt the course had benefited them personally in terms of confidence and team building. Staff and volunteers at Bute Advice Centre were overwhelmed by the positive feedback, which raised morale greatly within the Centre. One participant has joined Bute Produce as a volunteer. Another is really keen to exploit her knowledge gained, in developing recipes using her home grown veg and is keen to impart cookery skills to others. Offering to volunteer in support of Bute Advice Centre's Healthy Eating on a Budget course presently being offered in conjunction with Adult Learning.

Weaknesses

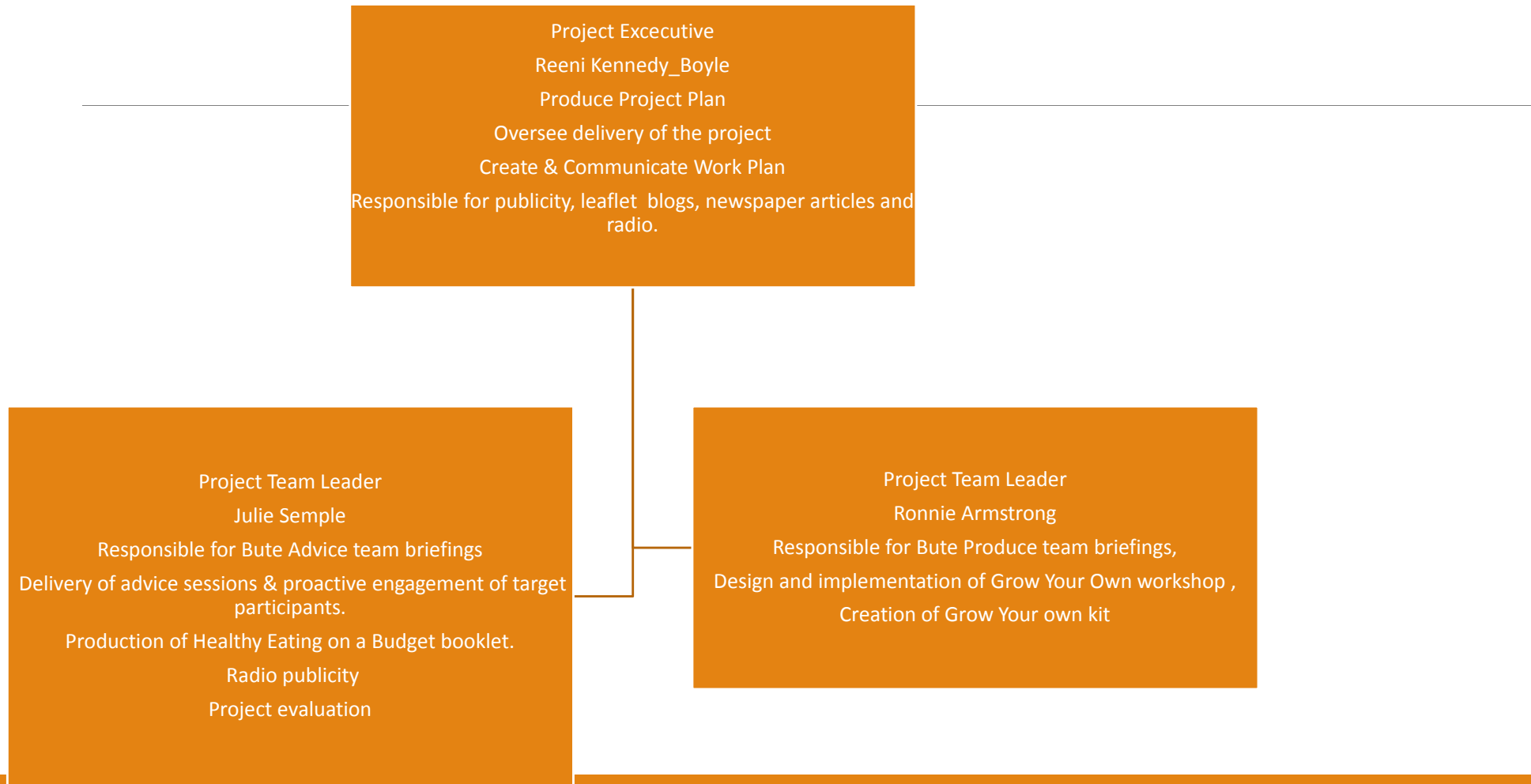
The pilot was extremely successful, however the results are limited in that the participant group was small and a snap shot in time.

The period of time between being made aware of the successful bids and the growing season was short, therefore leaving only a short time to promote the project, with more time a more varied group could have been assured.

Mobility issues were a concern, however Ronnie adapted the course to the limitations of each individual.



Project Management



Executive Summary & Recommendations

Bute Advice Centre and Bute Produce are extremely pleased with the success of the project. Despite the fact that from an initial 12 only 8 regularly attended with 6 attending all sessions, this was seen as very positive taking into consideration both physical and mental difficulties facing the group. The level of commitment was very strong and the feedback from participants was overwhelmingly successful. The partnership between the agencies worked very effectively. Regular team meetings and a clear focus on the aims and objectives of the project ensured both agencies were confident in their respective tasks. Awareness of food poverty and the Grow Your Own project was raised both within the target group and locally through Bute Produce blogs, newspaper articles, radio sessions and face-book insights (222 hits). The positive effect of this 4 week course has been felt by those who participated, both organisations and the wider community. Our recommendations would be, that a larger pilot be carried out, offered throughout the growing season to a wider selection of participants, encompassing all of the target groups who could benefit from this valuable type of support. Further a community growing project with flexible space where communities can work and produce together could expand the benefits further.